

## The Prayer Hall Services & Maintenance Trust

September 23, 2020

### PUBLIC NOTICE CUM CLARIFICATION

In view of the frequent queries we have been receiving over the last few weeks, the Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust ('PHS&MT' or 'Trust') would like to correct misleading and incorrect information being circulated in the media - particularly digital/social media and also provide certain clarifications, about the type and nature of services provided by PHS&MT, the role and responsibilities of the Coordinator and re-emphasize certain other facts which members of the public may not be fully aware of:

1. The ownership of the Prayer Hall vests with the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) and the PHS&MT has no proprietary rights over the Prayer Hall.
2. The Prayer Hall is available for use by members of all communities, religions, faiths and not only Zoroastrians. It is therefore incorrect to refer to it as the 'Parsi Prayer Hall'.
3. Any Parsi Irani Zoroastrian, wishing to use the Prayer Hall for obsequies, is free to have the ceremonies and prayers performed by a priest of his / her own choice.
4. The object for which the PHS&MT has been established is: (quoting from the Trust Deed) *"to assist the members of the Parsi / Irani Zoroastrian community in using the Prayer Hall at the Worli Cemetery and its cleanliness and upkeep"*.
5. In order to assist Parsi Irani Zoroastrians who wish to use the Hall, Er. Framroze Mirza has been appointed as Coordinator. He is contactable 24X7 on the following Telephone Numbers (+91) 8691012488; 9821421593. His role as Coordinator is to assist in giving details regarding an ambulance or hearse, preparing the Prayer Hall for each ceremony, providing for items required during ceremonies such as sukhad, flowers, fruits, etc. (at a cost to be decided mutually between the concerned parties) in case the officiating priest is not in a position to do so and providing guidance with regard to documentation prescribed by the authorities. The scope of his work includes overseeing security arrangements, cleaning & upkeep of the Prayer Hall and safe custody of all moveable items kept at the Hall.
6. It so happens that Er. Mirza is also a practicing priest and is one of the few priests who perform prayer ceremonies at the Prayer Hall. Families who either do not have a priest or whose priest is not willing to perform obsequies at the Prayer Hall, may if they wish, request Er. Mirza to conduct the prayers and arrange for other priests required for performing certain ceremonies at the Prayer Hall. **It is important however to clarify that there is absolutely no compulsion to enlist his services and members of the community are free to have ceremonies performed at the Prayer Hall through any priest / priests of their choice and are not bound in any way to get any ceremonies performed through Er. Mirza or the priests who work with him.**
7. The PHS&MT is neither entitled to, nor does it engage priests for prayers to be performed at the Prayer Hall and accordingly cannot charge, or receive, any consideration for obsequies to be performed at the Prayer Hall. **All matters pertaining to the payments to be made to the priest/s and the ceremonies to be**

**performed must be directly discussed and agreed between the concerned priest/s and the person availing of the priest's services and the Trust is in no way concerned with the same.**

8. The PHS&MT had over the past few years since it was set-up, followed a practice of issuing advisories as to the maximum amounts, which any priest who carries out ceremonies at the Prayer Hall, and not just Er. Mirza should charge, in respect of the various prayer ceremonies. The charges were meant to be indicative and issued as a guideline from time to time so that some sort of parity was maintained with the charges for similar ceremonies performed at Doongerwadi or in an Agiary or Atash Behram. The Trustees have decided to stop this practice forthwith, in view of the uncalled-for accusations levelled against the Trust, coupled with the fact that no other institution is doing so. The Trust has accordingly removed the Rate Chart from its website.
9. During the Covid 19 pandemic, bodies of persons who were Covid positive are brought to the crematorium, which is located in close proximity to the Prayer Hall. If the deceased person is a Parsi / Irani Zoroastrian whose family wishes to have Geh Sarna ceremony performed, the same has to be done in the parking area outside the Prayer Hall with the body of the deceased kept in the ambulance/hearse till the prayers are complete. This is in accordance with directions issued by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai. Er. Framroze Mirza has indicated his willingness to carry out the Geh Sarna ceremony as per these directives outside the crematorium in the car parking area. The family of the deceased person is free to engage any priest of their choice for the Geh Sarna and such arrangement has nothing to do with the Prayer Hall Services & Maintenance Trust, because as of now, it is impermissible by regulation to bring the body of the deceased (who was Covid positive) into the Prayer Hall.
10. Finally, it is important for those who wish to avail of the services of the Prayer Hall to know that the amounts which the Trust can afford to pay to the cleaners, watchmen & helpers working at the Hall are extremely low. Since the Trust is not charging for any services provided, it relies solely on the interest earned on its corpus and the small donations it receives from grateful users. Accordingly, it was decided some years ago that Er. Mirza would recover an amount of Rs. 6,000/- from users of the Hall for gratuities to be distributed amongst various service providers as necessary, in order to supplement their meagre earnings and consistently maintain the high level of service and cleanliness that the Trust has always ensured, since its inception. Unfortunately, Er. Mirza has had to face uncalled for criticism and considerable resistance for this payment and has been questioned why this amount is collected in cash and even been asked why he does not give a receipt for the same.

The Trustees have decided that in these circumstances, the earlier arrangement will be discontinued and Er. Mirza will no longer ask for the amount of Rs. 6,000/- from users of the Hall. The Trustees realise that this will further strain the limited resources of the Trust, at a time when interest earnings are depressed, but an attempt will be made to enhance the payments to service providers at the Hall. The Trustees are sure that the goodwill and generosity of users of the Hall will see us through this difficult phase and sincerely hope that the Prayer Hall is maintained at the same level of service and cleanliness as always.

The Trust welcomes any voluntary donations from users of the Prayer Hall and others, in order to enable the Trustees to maintain the Prayer Hall.

- 1) Cheques may be drawn in favour of "Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust" and be sent to:

**The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust,  
C/o The WZO Trust Funds, C-1 Hermes House,  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Mama Parmanand Marg, Opera House,  
Mumbai - 400 004.**

Or

- 2) Online transfer / NEFT / RTGS to Bank Account of the Trust

The details of Online transfer / NEFT / RTGS to account of The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust are as under:

**NAME OF BANK: DEUTSCHE BANK**  
**NAME OF BRANCH: HAZARIMAL SOMANI MARG, FORT, MUMBAI**  
**BRANCH ADDRESS: DB House, Hazarimal Somani Marg,  
Fort, Mumbai 400 001**  
**ACCOUNT TITLE: The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust**  
**ACCOUNT NUMBER: 400027626990019**  
**IFSC CODE: DEUT0784 PBC**  
**(This IFSC Code is common for all Branches of Deutsche Bank in India)**

**Trustees,  
The Prayer Hall Services and Maintenance Trust**